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ABSTRACT

The autobiography "I, Rigoberta Menchu" is a complicated text--the conditions of its production, the complexity of its subject matter, and the wide range of possible responses among North American readers create challenges for composition students and instructors. A week of taped interviews with Rigoberta Menchu, a Guatemalan Indian whose native language is a dialect of Quiche, yielded a 500-page text in Spanish, peppered with native Quiche terms. The text relating the atrocities committed by Guatemalan troops was then edited, reorganized, cut, and broken into chapters, and later translated into English. A composition instructor introduces the complications of the text by using supplementary texts, including a documentary film, to familiarize the students with the situation in Guatemala. Students then complete a series of reading assignments and writing assignments. The instructor often confronts students with their misappropriations of Menchu's text. Some students (and writing critics) go to extremes of either complete identification with her or complete exoticization of her. Students also tend to ignore Menchu's radical Marxist politics. Students are asked to do truly critical reading by questioning their assumptions about the stability of meaning in a given text and in a world they know chiefly through texts. An annotated list of six selected resource materials, journal writing assignments, the midterm exam based on the text, and in-class writing activities are attached. Contains 7 references.) (RS)

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Teaching Critical Reading with I, Rigoberta Menchú:

A paper presented at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Nashville, March 18, 1994[1]

The autobiography I, Rigoberta Menchú is an exceedingly complicated text. It has become a popular text in Women's Studies courses, Native American and Latin American Studies courses, Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature courses, and now even composition courses. However, the conditions of its production, the complexity of its subject matter, and the wide range of possible responses among North American readers create challenges for composition students and composition instructors. Rather than simplify or smooth over the problems presented by such a text, I try to exploit the difficulties, asking students to interrogate the text critically and to account for several kinds of contradictions that arise through their reading of it. Ultimately, I ask them to consider the material means of the production of the text, the general culture and the specific historical process that gave birth to it. I ask them to do truly critical reading by questioning their assumptions about the

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stability of meaning in a given text and in a world they know chiefly through texts. In this paper I will first sketch some of the intricacies of the text, and then I will tell how how I try to teach them not through lecture but through hands-on experience of the text. From this narrow focus, I will move to a general approach to texts, particularly recently popular "multicultural" texts.

The first theoretical difficulties arise from the conditions under which Menchú's testament was set down. Rigoberta Menchú is a Guatemalan Indian whose native language is a dialect of Quiché, just one of more than 20 Indian languages widely spoken in Guatemala. In fact, Spanish, the official language of Guatemala, is spoken as a native language by less than half of its population. Menchú didn't begin to learn Spanish until she was 20, and just three years later she dictated her testament to the Venezuelan ethnographer Elisabeth Burgos-Debray during a visit to Paris for political meetings.

A week of taped interviews yielded a 500-page text in Spanish, peppered with native Quiché terms. Burgos-Debray then set to work to edit the text, correcting Menchú's Spanish, organizing material thematically, cutting repeated material, inserting connecting passages, writing chapter titles, and assigning epigrams to each chapter, some from a text Menchú may have known (the Mayan religious tract Popol Vuh), some from a text she surely did not know (Miguel Asturias' novel Men of Maize). Therefore, whatever Rigoberta Menchú said to Elisabeth Burgos-Debray in a Paris apartment in 1982 has been extensively mediated for the audience that Burgos-Debray addresses with the book. Add to this

the fact for most North American readers, Menchú's testament is available only through an English translation by Ann Wright.

If we remember I. A. Richards' view of translation, that it is a negotiation not simply between languages but between mindsets and world views, then we can see how the experience of reading Wright's version of Burgos-Debray's version of Menchú's version of her life is several times removed from whatever we might recognize as Menchú's "world."

We can also interrogate the rhetorical intent of the three authors involved in the production of the English text. Rigoberta Menchú's purpose might be expressed best in the Spanish word often used for texts such as hers: testimonio. She testifies to the truth of the atrocities she has witnessed with her own eyes, including the public torture and murder of her own brother by Guatemalan government troops, and in telling her story, she accounts for the development of her political consciousness, thus justifying the violent resistance of the Quich é people to a genocidal government.

Elisabeth Burgos-Debray's motive is equally urgent, though for a different reason. As a ladina, or a South American of Spanish and not Indian descent, and a member of the race and class that create conditions of oppression among the continent's enormous population of Indians, she carries a burden of guilt. She explains in her introduction that she feels compelled to expose the complicity of liberal ladinos who admire ancient Indian culture in the abstract, even claiming it as their own in an effort to establish a distinctly Latin American identity, while materially benefiting from the domination of the real Indians in their midst.

As for translator Ann Wright's intent, we can only guess. Her purpose is certainly not as urgent as Burgos-Debray's and not nearly so urgent as that of Menchú herself. Most of Menchú's English-speaking readers live in a relatively stable democracy where the native population is not in open armed rebellion, having been subdued a century before in a brutal manner that is a model to the Guatemalan government. Few North American readers make the connection that Menchú herself might make between the poverty and exploitation of Guatemalan Indians and that of other oppressed groups north of the Rio Grande. The events of Menchú's narrative, so immediate to Menchú herself and to Burgos-Debray, can be made to seem remote in time, place, and meaning from Ann Wright's readership.

Knowledge of the material production of Menchú's text and questions about authorship leads to issues of its cultural production. Consider just three points as examples.

First, there is the politics of Menchú's use of Spanish, a dilemma she discusses quite openly. Spanish is not simply a foreign language to the Quiché, but also the language of colonization, domination, oppression, terror. On the one hand, it is a language of power, since it can help Menchú spread her truth and her message to a wider audience; also, like many colonized people, she sees that using the common language of the colonizer can unite disparate oppressed groups divided by language (162). On the other hand, she understands very well that learning a language is learning a way of thinking, and she knows the tendency of dominant cultures to engulf subordinate ones: "[T]here are Indians who don't wear Indian

clothes and have forgotten their languages, so they are not considered Indians" (167). Forging a linguistic link to the non-Indian world will lead to inevitable changes in her own character and in her Indian world, but as she says, "I learned Spanish out of necessity" (162). Learning Spanish is emblematic of many other changes the Quiché make to survive, not the least of which is taking up arms against their oppressors.

Second, there is the issue of Menchú's idiosyncratic view of her own culturethe filter through which she tells her story and understands its meaning. As she says herself, she is not just any Quiché Indian. Her father is Vicente Menchú, a traditional local leader who is converted to the revolutionary cause, makes alliances with other Indian groups and rural poor ladino groups, and eventually sacrifices his life during a mass demonstration in the capital. From the time she is a young girl, Rigoberta accompanies her father on his journeys to organize resistance groups, and is herself converted to the cause, sees her family murdered, and lives in exile in Mexico and Europe. The events of her life can't help but color her assessment of her culture, its values, its transformations, its necessary course of action for survival.

And finally, there is the fact that Menchú's narrative is constructed not in isolation from but in dialectic with ladino culture and its view of Indians. Among the cultural currents running through Menchú's life are colonial racism, missionary Catholicism, evangelical Protestantism, liberation theology, and Marxist political theory. Menchú quite self-consciously appropriates such aspects of Western religion and political philosophy as will serve her ends, and

these appropriations in turn shape her understanding of her world and her explanation of it to her audience.

Elizabeth Meese summarizes Menchú's difficult rhetorical relationship to her subject matter: "[S]he constructs her resistance according to her (mis)reading and (re)writing of the values and behaviors prescribed by Quiché tradition as well as of the common opposition of theory and practice represented in Western philosophy" (Meese 101). "Autoethnography" is Mary Louise Pratt's name for texts created in the midst of the cultural and political turbulence of "the contact zone": "[I]f ethnographic texts are those in which European metropolitan subjects represent to themselves their others (usually their conquered others), autoethnographic texts are representations that the so-defined others construct in response to or in dialogue with those texts" (Pratt 35). In short, Menchú's testament can be understood neither as a "pure" rendering of Indian life untouched by European influences, nor as a corrupted version of Indian life discredited by European influences. It is the personal testament and political philosophy of a thoroughly modern woman, with all the complications and contradictions, all the flux and flow, all the painful crosscurrents and uncertainties and compromises and swift, radical transformations that characterize life in the late 20th century.

How to introduce the complications I've been sketching to composition students? First, I supplement the book with a number of texts, including a documentary film, that familiarize them with the situation in Guatemala and events in Menchú's life since she wrote the book, such as winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992. (See

Appendix A, "Selected Resource Materials for Teaching I, Rigoberta Menchú.") I also use a series of reading and writing assignments that are part of the ongoing journal students keep throughout the course. (See Appendix B, "Journal Assignments Based on I Rigoberta Menchú"; Appendix C, "Midterm Exam Based on I, Rigoberta Menchú"; and Appendix D, "Paragraph Exercise for Teaching I, Rigoberta Menchú.") The journal questions ask students to read, summarize, and respond to portions of the text in fairly simple ways. The midterm exam is more of a challenge, asking questions that grow out of in-class discussions and my comments on their written work, in which I try to complicate their typically simplistic views of the text.

For example, I often confront students with what I perceive to be their misappropriations of Menchú's text. By interpolating selected pieces of Menchú's story into their own master narratives, they nullify important differences between her experiences and beliefs and their own. One student linked the Quiché belief in the nahual, or protective animal spirit, to the Christian concept of guardian angels. I praised her for trying to understand Quiché beliefs in terms of her own, but asked her also to examine differences between the belief systems that gave rise to these two very different relationships to the spiritual world. Another student identified Menchú's attitude toward ladinos as racial "prejudice" and recommended the standard old civil rights chestnuts of love and understanding; I asked him to define the differences in Menchú's admittedly racialized attitudes toward ladinos and the racial prejudice of a middle-class white American. Many students

understand the armed rebellion of the Guatemalan peasantry in the context of the American revolution, referring explicitly to the doctrines of the Declaration of Independence: "She and her people have the right to take charge of their lives." Again I challenge their reinscription of the events in Guatemala as another myth of freedom-loving patriots, asking them to account for the difference between an upper-class revolt against a distant colonial power and a lower-class revolt against a racist, terrorist government.

Another response to texts such as Menchú's that I see among my students is a tendency to go to the extremes of either complete identification with her or complete exoticization of her. One blond-haired blue-eyed Californian wrote, "Reading I, Rigoberta Menchú made me think of the values I live by from when I was born and of things I was taught by my parents." While accepting her empathy with Quiché values, I asked her to think about ways in which Menchú might challenge her own middle-class American values and beliefs. Another student put Menchú at arm's length by writing, "Menchú's people have some interesting values," and he had trouble answering my question about which Quiché values might either overlap with or challenge his own. I try to steer students toward a response that recognizes both similarities and differences between themselves and Menchú, a response that embraces their shared humanity but acknowledges crucial differences in the material conditions of their lives. In a recent College English article, Patrick Hogan calls for a reading of works by writers who are unlike us that "allows for freeing oneself from narcissistic constraints and experiencing what one is not--but still on the basis of what one is"

(Hogan 189-90). When even a Navajo student, who had more reason than anybody in the classroom, wrote, "My people have the same values" as the Quiché, I challenged her to account for differences between her own personal situation and Rigoberta Menchú's by considering the different histories, cultures, and present politics of the Quiché in South America and the Navajo in North America.

And finally, in their admiration for the courageous decision of the Quiché people to rise up against their oppressors, my students tend to ignore Menchú's radical Marxist politics. They see the plight of the Quiché people in terms of simple social justice. One student wrote, "The Quiché people began to see the harsh reality of a society so cruel to its own majority--the Indian people," and another wrote, "The poor had to stick together to overcome and defeat the rich, no matter what their differences." My students tend to have trouble following the line of their own thinking to its ultimate conclusion--in Menchú's case, a Marxist revolution that would bring the poor to power and redistribute the wealth of Guatemalan society. Their thinking is muddled in a productive way when I point out that United States has long supported the government of Guatemala in its suppression of the rebellion, providing both training and arms to the Guatemalan military. My students also have trouble transferring their warm and fuzzy feelings of solidarity with the distant Quiché to any oppressed groups closer to home. The issues of injustice and righteous rebellion that they understand in the abstract in the case of the Quiché have little to do in their minds with the widening gap between rich and poor in the United States, the rights of undocumented workers, the drug trade, the Los Angeles riots.

My students are not alone in their misappropriations of Menchú's text in the service of an inappropriate master narrative. Elizabeth Meese, for example, conflates the Quiché people's struggle to survive with the struggle of academic feminists to gain power in the university: "The location or 'place' of feminist criticism, then, is the 'some place' of guerilla fighters, like the compañeros de la montana [sic] who steal, hide, attack, and set up camp somewhere else, awaiting the unpredictable moment when they will strike again" (127).

We also see precedents in the published professional literature on Menchú for my students' dual tendency to identify with her and exoticize her at the same time. Rosemary Feal both distances Menchú's text by placing it in the genre of historically remote American slave narratives and domesticizes it by referring approvingly to the tendency of ethnographer/collaborators to lose their own identify in that of their informants. As Cuban ethnographer Miguel Barnet said of his work with Esteban Montejo, a 100-year-old man who started life as a slave, "'I think that I am culturally Black, too'" (Feal 102).

And finally, like my students, not enough critics writing on I, Rigoberta Menchú have taken its radical politics seriously. Claudia Salazar discusses Menchú's violation of the Western dichotomies of public and private, personal and political, theory and practice as if it is some kind of individual achievement, and Meese makes the same move. Neither critic points to the most likely source of Menchú's inspiration in these areas: practical revolutionary theory, which can be traced in a direct line from Lenin (in "What Is to Be Done?") to

Rosa Luxembourg (in Reform or Revolution) to Gramsci (in The Prison Notebooks) to Mao (in "The United Front in Cultural Work") to Che Guevara (in Venceremos) to Paulo Friere (in The Pedadgogy of the Oppressed) to the compañeros, or comrades, who trained Menchú and whom she joins in her book as a revolutionary theorist.

The original Spanish title of Menchú's book is Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia: My name is Rigoberta Menchú and this is how my consciousness was born. Her use of the word conciencia shows her understanding of the revolutionary concept that Freire calls conscientização, and that he defines as the growing awareness that the order of things is not inevitable or fated, though ideology tells us that it is, but is instead created by human beings, and can be changed (100-101). To foster truly critical reading in my students, I want to them to see that their responses to written texts are in many ways the products of the man-made ideologies that they accept as natural. I want them to learn to question every understanding they believe they have about a text, so that their understanding is not dictated by an unchallenged master narrative, by narcissism, or by political prejudice. I want them to account for the material and cultural means of production of a given text, asking themselves, "Who created it? Under what material conditions? Through what cultural influences? For what purpose?" I want to them to locate themselves in relation to the text in a realistic way, asking themselves, "Who is the author? Who am I? How are we similar? How are we different? What are our relative places in the broad cultural and political systems that both connect and divide us? How does our relationship influence what the author

says to me and how I make sense of what is said?" I want my students to realize that the meanings of texts, like the meanings of life, are highly unstable, and that it is within their power to negotiate many more meanings than what has been made to seem the most obvious.

Appendix A:

Selected Resource Materials for Teaching I, Rigoberta Menchú

Feal, Rosemary Geisdorfer. "Spanish American Ethnobiography and the Slave Narrative Tradition: Biografía de un cimarrón and Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú." Modern Language Studies 20.1 (1990): 100-11.

An interesting discussion of the complicated "authorhood" of "ethnobiographies" such as I, Rigoberta Menchú. Feal includes as examples from the North American experience traditional slave narratives (Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave, Written by Himself) and contemporary works (The Autobiography of Malcolm X).

Harvest of Violence: The Maya Indians and the Guatemalan Crisis. Ed. Robert M. Carmack. Norman: U Oklahoma P, 1988.

One of the best of several anthologies available on recent historical and political events in Guatemala. See especially Beatriz Manz's "The Transformation of La Esperanza, an Ixcán Village" (70-89) and editor Carmack's own "The Story of Santa Cruz Quiché" (39-69).

Meese, Elizabeth A. "(Dis)Locations: Reading the Theory of a Third World Woman in I . . . Rigoberta Menchú." (Ex)Tensions: Re-Figuring Feminist Criticism. Urbana: U Illinois P, 1990. 97-128.

A chapter in Meese's work of postmodern feminist theory. The discussion of Menchú features references to classic feminist and cutting-edge postmodern theories (Adrienne Rich, Simone de Beauvoir, Marguerite Duras, Gayatri Spivak,

Chandra Mohanty, Biddy Martin, Homi Baba) and lots of wordplay created by parentheses and slashes.

Salazar, Claudia. "Rigoberta's Narrative and the New Practice of Oral History." Women and Language 13.1 (1990): 7-8.

An understanding of Menchú's rhetorical practice as a feminist deconstruction of patriarchal dichotomies of public and private, personal and political, theory and practice.

Teaching and Testimony: Rigoberta Menchú in the North American Classroom. Ed. Allen Carey-Webb and Steve Benz. New York: SUNY P, forthcoming in 1995.

This is the fifth volume of the series Interruptions: Border Testimonies and Critical Discourses edited by Henry Giroux. It contains articles on teaching Menchú's text in classes ranging from Women's Studies, Native American Studies, Latin American Studies, Comparative Literature, and Anthropology, and includes my offering on teaching the book in a composition course.

When the Mountains Tremble. Ed. Peter Kinoy. Cin. Thomas Siegel. Skylight Pictures, 1983.

An excellent documentary about the recent political upheaval in Guatemala. The film features Rigoberta Menchú as a narrator and includes material on events not covered in I, Rigoberta Menchú, such as demonstrations and uprisings in urban centers and the involvement of the Reagan White House in arming and training the Guatemalan military.

Appendix B:

Journal Assignments Based on I Rigoberta Menchú

Journal #1

Read Menchú viii-xxi ("Translator's note" and "Introduction"). You will learn there how the book was written. Summarize the process described by the editor (Burgos-Debray) and the translator (Wright). Comment on the way the book was written. Whose book is it?

Journal #2

Read Menchú 1-90 (Chapters I-XIII). In these opening chapters, before she tells of her extensive contact with ladinos and with other Indian groups, Menchú carefully defines the cultural values of the Quiché people. Summarize the main features of her people's values, and explain them using specific examples from the book.

Journal #3

Read Menchú 91-121 (Chapters XIV-XVI). In these chapters, Menchú continues to explain the relation of the Quiché people to "the outside world." What is that relation? What is the place of the Quiché and of Indians in general in Guatemalan society?

Journal #4

Read Menchú 122-226 (Chapters XVII-XXXI). From her sheltered beginnings in an isolated village, Menchú eventually travels and comes to know many different kinds of people. Her first beliefs about and attitudes toward ladinos and other Indian groups change markedly. Explain the change in her beliefs and attitudes, using specific examples from the book.

Midterm

Finish Menchú (Chapters XXXII-XXXIV, 227-247). The midterm exam will be based on Menchú's entire book as well as the essay "The Story of Santa Cruz Quiché" from the book (on reserve in the library) Harvest of Violence (ed. Robert M. Carmack, U of Oklahoma P, 1988, 39-69), which we will discuss the class just before the exam, and the film When the Mountains Tremble, which we will watch in class. The exam will be similar in format to the practice exam you wrote a few weeks ago.

Appendix C:

Midterm Exam Based on I, Rigoberta Menchú

You have one class period (an hour and a quarter) to write an answer to ONE of the following questions IN THE FORM OF AN ESSAY (about 300-500 words). You should, in other words, not just write an answer to a question, but compose a piece of writing that can stand alone and be read by an audience without knowledge of either the questions you answer or the texts you write about. Your essay should support a main idea with relevant details from the texts; use page numbers in parentheses when you quote or refer to specific passages, but don't bother to write a bibliography.

1. In the documentary film When the Mountains Tremble, U.S. President Ronald Reagan is shown addressing Congress and asking them send aid to the government of Guatemala to help it "fight communism" and "build a better democracy." Do you think that the Guatemalan army's war against "subversive" Indians and poor ladinos is a war to "fight communism" and "build a better democracy"? In your answer, refer to both Menchú's autobiography I, Rigoberta Menchú and Carmack's essay "The Story of Santa Cruz Quiché."

2. In his essay "The Story of Santa Cruz Quiché," Robert Carmack documents the radicalization of the Indians of La Estancia, a hamlet of Santa Cruz (see the section "Making Guerillas a La Estancia," 47-55). How does the story he tells help you understand the radicalization of Menchú and her people in I, Rigoberta Menchú? That is, which of Carmack's details illuminate which of Menchú's details? Refer to specific passages from both texts.

3. Near the end of the documentary film When the Mountains Tremble, Rigoberta Menchú says that her people were brought up to believe that suffering was their fate, but that she has learned that they have the right to take charge of their lives and "fulfill their potential as human beings." Her autobiography I, Rigoberta Menchú documents many other ways in which her people abandon or modify their traditions and values in order to survive. Discuss this idea, referring to specific passages from the book.

Appendix D:

Paragraph Exercise for Teaching I, Rigoberta Menchú

For this in-class writing activity, I asked students to work in groups and write group paragraphs based on their responses to one of the journal assignments (#4, about Menchú's change in attitude toward ladinos). The following class period I asked groups to exchange paragraphs and to rewrite the paragraphs they received, offering a written explanation of the changes they made.

I. Original group paragraph:

In the beginning of I, Rigoberta Menchú, Rigoberta and the other Indian tribes were nieve of the cruelness amongst ladinos. Rigoberta's prayer stated, "We cannot harm the life of one of your children, we are your children." (page 58) Later in the book as Rigoberta becomes older and more civilized an old lady said to her, "I've got a surprise for you. I've killed a soldier." (page 146) This statement contradicts the prayer of the Quiche people, but after the old lady had done this everyone was happy and wanted to live again.

Paragraph rewritten by another group:

In the beginning of I, Rigoberta Menchú, Rigoberta and the other Indian tribes were naive of the cruelness amongst ladinos. Rigoberta's prayer stated, "We cannot harm the life of one of your children, we are your children" (58). As Menchú traveled, she became educated and learned about self-defense. As a direct result of the self-defense mechanism a soldier was killed. The woman that killed him said, "I've got a surprise for you. I've killed a soldier" (146). By the violent act of killing the soldier, Menchú's organization demonstrated a direct contradiction to their earlier beliefs.

Explanation from rewriting group:

We changed the sentence "Later in the book as Rigoberta comes older and more civilized an old lady said to her . . ." You are assuming she was savage instead of uneducated. We tried to introduce how the killing came about. We also tried to explain the contradiction.

II. Original group paragraph:

Rigoberta Menchú and her people felt that the ladinos took advantage of them. Ladinos had their government which was forced upon the Indian people. They were always told what to do, how to do it, and even when to do it. Ladinos also made them vote for someone they didn't even know. "We didn't even know that they were votes they'd taken away. My parents laughed when they heard them say, 'Our President' because for us he was the President of the ladinos not ours at all." (p. 27)

Through Rigoberta's travels, she finds that there are rich and poor ladinos. Her views towards the rich are basically the same, but now she knows why she hates them. The rich ladinos exploited her people and did not care what they thought. "I'll buy you these things but you stay here because I'm ashamed to be seen with you in the market." (p. 93)

Paragraph rewritten by another group:

Rigoberta Menchú and the Quiché Indians along with all the Indians suffering in Guatemala feel that they are constantly being taken advantage of by the ladinos. The ladino government which is forced upon the Indians represses them in many ways. The Indians are told what to do and when to do it. They are tricked into voting

and also into signing numerous documents because they cannot read or understand Spanish, the ladinos' language. "We didn't even know that they were votes they'd taken away. My parents laughed when they heard them say, 'Our President' because for us he was the President of the ladinos not ours at all" (27).

Through Rigoberta's travels and contact with ladinos she realizes not all ladinos are rich and evil. Her hatred toward toward the rich continues but she no longer views all ladinos as liars and thieves. She comes to understand that some ladinos want to help her cause and feel for her people. The rich ladinos are the ones to blame and Rigoberta comes to understand this better as she spends more and more time among the ladinos. It was the rich ladinos who controlled the government and exploited her people.

Explanation from rewriting group:

We basically just elaborated on your ideas. We added a few statements to back up your ideas and to get your point across. Your first quotation was good. We couldn't understand what you meant by your second quotation, so we couldn't see how to explain it or connect it to the ideas in the paragraph. So we dropped it.

III. Original group paragraph:

In the beginning Menchú states, "We must not trust them, white men are all thieves" (69). She comes in contact with a ladino and says, "He taught me to think more clearly about some of my ideas which were wrong, like saying all ladinos are bad. He didn't teach me through ideas, he showed me by his actions" (165). This clearly shows the stereotype and the prejudice her family taught her was wrong and now she knew it.

Paragraph rewritten by another group:

Early in Rigoberta Menchú's life she expressed an extreme mistrust and bitter hatred toward the ladinos, due to experiences discussed by her ancestry. Menchú considered anyone that disrespected the Indian cultural heritage was a ladino. "We must not trust them, white men are all thieves" (69). Rigoberta Menchú's attitudes began to change as she started to communicate with ladinos, such as the friend who taught her Spanish. She comes in contact with this ladino and says, "He taught me to think more clearly about some of my ideas which were wrong, like saying all ladinos are bad. He didn't teach me through ideas, he showed me by his actions" (165). This clearly shows the stereotype and the prejudice her family taught her was wrong and now she knew it.

Explanation from rewriting group:

The only major problem was that you needed to introduce your quotes. You needed to describe what the quotes were referring to.

IV. Original group paragraph:

In the beginning Menchú states, "We must not trust them, white men are all thieves" (69). She comes in contact with a ladino and says, "He taught me to think more clearly about some of my ideas which were wrong, like saying all ladinos are bad. He didn't teach me through ideas, he showed me by his actions" (165). This clearly shows the stereotype and the prejudice her family taught her was wrong and now she knew it.

Paragraph rewritten by another group:

Rigoberta Menchú was taught by her grandparents and parents that all ladinos are bad: "Many of our race now know how

to till. The White Man is responsible for this. They blame the White Man for coming and teaching us to kill. . . We must not trust them, white men are all thieves" (68, 69). Through time her attitude started to change. She was more understanding and open to the ladinos. One person in particular was her Spanish teacher: "He taught me to think more clearly about some of my ideas which were wrong, like saying all ladinos are bad. He didn't teach me through ideas, he showed me by his actions" (165). This clearly shows the stereotype and the prejudice her family taught her was wrong and now she knew it.

Explanation from rewriting group:

The paragraph showed good examples. However, they were very vague in explanation, so what we did was to add another quote and few statements to better explain the paragraph.

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